

Her 7-year-old eyes sweep the area searching for her mom and dad. There is no sign of them nor of her little brother. She turns in a complete circle looking for them. She forgets about her singing. She just wants to find her family. Her clenched lips and attempt not to cry are hidden behind the Covid protection mask.

“Do you need help in finding your parents?” I ask. She nods “They were around this area, right here,” she whispers as her clouded blue eyes again search the now empty five church pews.

My husband and I were part of other parents, grandparents, and family members, and friends attending an end-of-the year children’s choral concert conducted at a community church. Children from Kindergarten to Senior High school sang, crooned, hummed or otherwise belted out music selections chosen from their choral directors for the one-and-a-half-hour program. Masks covered the smiles of delight as each melody ended with applause from the filled church pews.

As the singers take an end of the concert bow, they are instructed to find the persons who brought them. The younger singers run to family. The older singers exit the side doors. We, along with our sixth-grade granddaughter’s parents head down the center aisle toward the main doors. Our granddaughter will be waiting for us outside.

The fright in the eyes of this young singer stops us. When I ask if she would like us to take her outdoors to search for her parents she hesitates. (Never go with strangers is a thought that probably crosses her mind.) I add that we will bring her back inside if she does not find her mom and dad. She says, “Okay”. I want to wrap her in a quilt to comfort her. No need, though. As we turn to leave, she finds her dad approaching. She sighs in relief running to him. “We were waiting for her outdoors,” he explains as he puts his arms around her shoulders. (This is better than a quilt.) As the daddy and the daughter go out the church double doors hand in hand, I follow them outdoors.

Human contact is frowned upon during these times of pandemic. I struggle to keep from hugging this little girl to comfort her. Really, I should not touch another person, anyway. That is why thinking of wrapping a homemade quilt around a person in need surrounds me. Even now I ask my grandchildren if I may hug them. They are growing up in a “no touch” society.

The doors close behind us. My husband and I sweep our eyes over the area in search of a certain concert vocalist. Our 12-year-old granddaughter connects with us with smiling eyes. Masks off, she and her friends and family pose for photos.

Hugs may come later.

Lana Russ